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RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 001417

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/18/2018

TAGS: ASEC PGOV PREL KPKO UN AU SU

SUBJECT: SUDANESE INTEL CHIEF WORRIED ABOUT ISLAMIC
RADICALS IF ICC ISSUES ARREST WARRANT AGAINST PRESIDENT
BASHIR

REF: KHARTOUM 1405

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: The GOS will be hard-pressed to control the actions of Islamic radicals in Sudan if the ICC issues an arrest warrant against President Bashir, NISS Chief Salah Ghosh told CDA Fernandez September 17. Ghosh clarified that he did not tell French Presidential Advisor Bruno Joubert that the GOS would "unleash" radicals against western interests in Sudan if an arrest warrant is issued, but rather that it would be increasingly difficult for the GOS to control them and would even be challenged to protect itself against extremist groups, who would question why the regime is cooperating with the West if an arrest warrant is issued despite such cooperation. On Darfur, Ghosh said that he and Vice President Taha met with representatives of SLM leader Minni Minawi September 17 to discuss ways of bringing Minawi back into the GNU and requested US assistance to encourage Minawi to return to Khartoum. Regarding UNAMID deployment, CDA Fernandez encouraged Ghosh to press the regime to allow Ethiopian and Egyptian peacekeepers to drive overland directly into Darfur to facilitate their rapid deployment. End summary.

Controlling Islamic Radicals in Sudan

¶12. (C) National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Chief Salah Ghosh told CDA Fernandez (accompanied by Station Chief and polchief) September 17 that the regime will have a difficult time controlling radical Islamic extremist groups in Sudan if the ICC issues an arrest warrant against President Bashir. Ghosh clarified that he did not tell French Presidential Advisor Bruno Joubert that the regime would "unleash" radicals against Western interests in Sudan if an arrest warrant is issued, as the French and some other diplomats have been saying. He noted that he had explained this to Joubert in Arabic and Joubert's translator had put it into French so NISS had no idea that such an alarming misinterpretation was making the rounds. He asked that the Americans "correct the record" with any misinformed Europeans and added that he had told EU Special Representative Torben Brylle, who speaks English, the accurate account. Ghosh said the NISS currently keeps close tabs on Islamic radical "cells" (he avoided using the term "terrorists") and meets regularly with them. Ghosh said he personally has met with these extremists in prison as well as others at the mosques in order to "change their minds."

¶3. (C) Ghosh said that the regime had been successful in turning many potential jihadists away from violent action although they still held extreme views without actually committing any crime. "We told them that real jihad is organized fighting in defense of the country," so war with Israel or with Chad would be jihad, but not targeting South Sudan or diplomats or peacekeepers accepted by Sudan. "The best way is to convince the cells to change their behavior," said Ghosh, but if there is an arrest warrant against President Bashir "we will lose control" of the situation and of monitoring these groups and it will be increasingly "difficult to take care of security since we will be focused on protecting our own leaders." He noted that two of the members of a terrorist cell that killed US Embassy staff on January 1 had roots in the regime's "Islamic Movement" but he feared that a polarized political situation would turn such a trickle into a torrent and sweep away the regime.

¶4. (C) Ghosh said that Islamic extremists will become increasingly radicalized if there is an arrest warrant against the President and will ask "what has the CIA done for you? Why are we cooperating? Let's go to Jihad." Ghosh pointed out that President Bashir, FVP Salva Kiir, and he himself have already been identified as the top potential targets by the busted Al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Niles (AQTN) group of August 2007 due to perceived cooperation with the West. Ghosh said the regime recognizes that "the ICC is a political game" and that "the Save Darfur lobby is trying to mobilize against us. Those are our enemies, we have no other enemies, certainly not the United States." Ghosh warned that an ICC indictment against the President "will be

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the start of a direct clash between us and the international community." To avoid this, Ghosh urged greater engagement between Sudan and the US and expressed hope for "greater confidence" between the NCP and the USG. Politicians in the US are harsh with the NCP and count our faults, never looking for the positive, while the US is always willing to overlook the defects of the SPLM in spite of corruption in the GOSS, complained Ghosh. "We need close engagement if you want to help us," urged Ghosh. He readily admitted that Sudan has made many mistakes and needs to accommodate fully American concerns about UNAMID deployment, a peace process and American humanitarian concerns in Darfur.

¶5. (C) Ghosh said that he is committed fully to counter-terrorism cooperation despite the pressure of some politicians in the regime to stop it. If they end cooperation with the U.S. "I will leave my position," he noted, as he believed that both countries benefited from this. He made a particular point of emphasizing the practical value of this link as a means of bilateral communication between the GOS and USG. He added that he understood Washington's suspicion of the NCP, "you think they have too much power and you would like to see them cut down to size." "We know that you are for using the political process to weaken them some, using your friends like the SPLM and other parties." This is politics and it is reasonable, "that is the way the political game is played whether in Sudan or America." He would like to see monthly meetings with the Charge because "this is very useful to speak honestly and clearly to each other."

Ghosh and VP Taha Meet with SLM/Minawi Representatives

¶6. (C) Ghosh said that he and VP Ali Osman Taha had just met with SLM/Minawi representative (and head of DPA implementation) Mohammed el Tijane to discuss ways of bringing Minawi back to Khartoum and implement the DPA. Ghosh requested the help of the US "to convince Minawi to return to Khartoum" and said that Taha might even travel to El Fasher to meet with Minawi to discuss DPA implementation. (Note: Separately, Tijane passed the same information to CDA and polchief at the CDA's Ramadan Iftar at the Rotana Hotel in Khartoum September 17 and to AF/SPG TDYoff later that

evening. Tijane complained of continued attacks September 17 by GOS forces in north Darfur outside of Khazan Tunjur but said that the fighting had stopped by 6:30 pm. Minawi himself confirmed this information to poloff in Darfur by satphone late the evening of September 17 and claimed that SLM forces routed the GOS forces and took 40 of their vehicles. Minawi confirmed the meetings of his representatives with Ghosh and Taha and questioned why Nafie was not involved. He also questioned the sincerity of Ghosh and Taha given the ongoing GOS attacks even while the regime was meeting with SLM officials in Khartoum. At noon on September 18, CDA Fernandez spoke to Minawi by satphone. Minnawi reported no ground fighting but a "SAF Antonov" had bombed near Tabit (30 miles SW of El Fasher) killing 5 civilians working in their fields. Minawi said that he feared the "not only the NCP, but SAF has its factions and you agree with one and the other does this." He was not opposed to meeting Taha on Friday, September 19 but wanted tangible results from the meeting and guarantees against further attacks, and asked rhetorically "is he reaching out because he is going to New York and has to look like a peacemaker?" End note.)

¶7. (C) Ghosh said that the problem of Minawi "was not a deep one." He cheerfully admitted that some of the problems were created by the NCP, some were of Minawi's own creation and had to do with corruption, lack of capacity and ethnic problems between Zaghawa and non-Zaghawa. The death in a car accident of Darfur negotiator Magzoub al-Khalifa in July 2007 had left a gap in relations with Minawi that the toxic Nafie Ali Nafie, Al-Khalifa's successor with the Darfur file, had not even bothered to try to fill.

Overland Deployment of Ethiopian and Egyptian UNAMID Troops

¶8. (C) CDA Fernandez suggested to Ghosh that the regime could improve its image and relations with the West by allowing and

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encouraging Ethiopian and Egyptian UNAMID peacekeeping troops to deploy overland to Darfur (as discussed with AF/SPG Shortley via SVTC September 16). CDA noted that this would be both a tangible and a symbolic change that would enhance Western confidence that the regime wants to change its ways. Ghosh promised to consider the proposal and discuss it with others in the regime. CDA also noted that "if we look at tangible results since July, we seem to be going backwards in Darfur." The current military campaign, actions against IDP camps, such as the Kalma massacre and harassment of NGOs continues unabated, especially in South Darfur. Ghosh responded that "the problem is that South Darfur state is in the hands of the janjaweed," and is the stronghold of Darfur's Arab tribes, unlike North and West Darfur states where Africans serve as governor and there is less NGO harassment and less pressure on IDP camps. CDA Fernandez noted that there are Arab tribes, such as the Baggara Rizeigat, who refused to join in the fighting, "there has to be a way of ensuring order, without falling into brutality such as we saw in Kalma." If there was a vote today on ICC deferral today at the Security Council, "we would veto, although there is still time to change. Ghosh readily admitted that "we need to change."

Comment

¶9. (C) Friendly and eminently open to engagement with the US throughout the meeting (never more so than in this particular meeting), Ghosh was meticulously careful to present the potential actions of Sudanese extremists in response to an ICC arrest warrant as a risk, rather than as a threat by the regime. The NCP is no doubt worried about keeping a lid on extremists, but its primary concern at the moment is convincing the West to help it avoid an ICC arrest warrant against Bashir by any means necessary. The meeting of Ghosh

and Taha with SLM rep Tijane is a positive sign, but only if the regime is serious about making tangible concessions to Minawi in implementing more of the DPA in order to ensure his return to Khartoum. The continued attacks on Minawi simultaneous to the talks in Khartoum could be a sign that the regime hopes to convince Minawi by all means necessary, that it is entirely duplicitous, or - perhaps most alarming - not completely in control of events. Unfortunately it is likely the latter, as the regime has thus far proven itself incapable even of presenting the basic outlines of a possible solution to Darfur in its much touted Darfur People's Initiative (which remains an empty shell weeks after being announced). However the regime is under increasing pressure to do something on Darfur in advance of the UNGA next week and possible discussions of an article 16 ICC deferral in the following weeks, and may yet present a proposal on Darfur in advance of or at the UNGA, as VP Taha himself will head the GOS delegation in NY next week (as predicted by FM Alor in reftel).

FERNANDEZ